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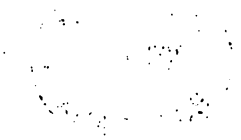

"CHANGE"

AS A

MENTAL RESTORATIVE.

BY

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"CHANGE"
AS A MENTAL RESTORATIVE.

THERE is too often, it must be feared, a lack of clearly-defined purpose in the medical prescription of "change" as a mental restorative. Vague terms, for example, relief, rest, quiet; and figurative phrases, such as "taking off the strain," "breaking the monotony," and "setting up again," are employed to designate the remedy and the effect it is intended to produce; but there is no more precise notion of the way in which benefit will result than is represented by the popular expression, "It will do good!" A plan of treatment so extensively adopted, and at times so inconvenient and costly, as ordering a patient "away for change," ought to be fully understood and specifically applied. That it is not either the one or the other may be inferred from the almost empiricism with which it is recommended, particularly in cases that have baffled other expedients for their cure; and from the very large proportion of instances in which the remedy fails, and evil rather than good is entailed on the sufferer. Let us attempt the study of three common and typical cases, remembering that it is the duty of the physician not only to do his best for his patient, but to assure himself that nothing better can be done for him; and, above all things, to ascertain clearly *what* it is he desires to do, and *how* it may be most directly accomplished.

CASE I.

A. was verging on middle-life, and held a position of high trust and responsibility in an old-established house of business, where the transactions were considerable and involved large interests, but were not speculative. His duties were managerial and arithmetical, such as would tax the brain-powers of a less experienced man, but by practice he had come to perform them almost automatically. His figure-work resembled that of a calculating machine, and when a process was commenced by the Will it could be carried out subconsciously. The greater part of his daily business was of a routine character, and the intellectual strain caused by it could not at any time during the previous ten years have been great. He had some domestic trouble about a year and a half before the date of which I speak, but seemed to have recovered from its depressing effects. Nevertheless he had practically "broken down." His work had become a toil. He worried over it, and laboured through it with distaste and weariness, and he had begun to make mistakes. There were no indications of cardiac, lung, or any other variety of organic disease. His general health was fairly good, with the exception of slight stomach symptoms, ascribed to "dyspepsia." He slept without trouble when once he fell asleep, but was apt to lie awake anxiously thinking for what seemed a long period before forgetting himself, and awoke unrefreshed and slowly in the morning, complaining of a creeping sensation in the back of the head and nape of the neck, which lasted an hour or more after assuming the erect position, but then gradually subsided, leaving a sensation of numbness which he described as "extending over the whole brain." The circulation was weak, the breathing somewhat laboured and interspersed with sighs. The skin had the appearance of being dirty and mottled. The extremities were alternately cold and hot, and there

were local perspirations. Position in bed, or even when sitting in a chair, had a strangely marked effect on the local surface temperature, and doubtless on the blood-supply of the deeper structures. The eyes were slightly injected, but sleepy-looking. The pupils changed too tardily under the influence of light. There was a little knitting of the brows—the token of mental effort—when thinking before answering a question; and an air of lassitude and general despondency prevailed. He was "nervous" and irritable, started at any sudden noise or intrusion, and was excited to passion with an impulse to abuse or strike those around him after any strong muscular exercise—for example, hastening to catch a train. He brooded over the past and had gloomy forebodings of the future, cared nothing for society, and without being really ill or obliged to give up his work, he feared that he would be compelled to do so, and having a family—which he began to lose interest in, and to look upon as a burden—this was an additional source of uneasiness. He had been prescribed chloral to procure sleep, bromide of potassium with the same object, and nux vomica as a muscular tonic, all without permanent benefit. "Change" was now recommended. It was practically impossible for him to obtain more than a brief holiday, say a month at the outside; and he had taken such a holiday in the autumn of the previous year without any appreciable benefit, although his condition was, presumably, at that time more amenable to the effects of "change" than it could be expected to be now when the same remedy was again prescribed.

The mental state—with which, of course, is inseparably connected the nerve-state—of a person in the condition described is essentially one of failure of energy as distinguished from exhaustion of strength. When routine duty which has long been easy becomes difficult this is often the fact. There has been no augmentation of the demand for mind- and nerve-force, but the

ordinary supply has failed; not because there is no *strength*, but because there is little *energy*. In practice this is a very important discrimination, and one which it should not be difficult to make. It follows that change cannot be needed for the sake of *rest*. Automatic work —which is the sort of work in which A. had been chiefly engaged—generally becomes less exacting every year. The nervous centres, or combinations, formed by the repetition of the same series of mento-physical actions, are consolidated and strengthened by functional exercise, until in process of time work which in itself may appear complicated and difficult, comes to be simple and effortless. Work that a man has done for years with ease cannot have suddenly become "over-work," unless the state and strength of the worker have wholly changed. The condition of a worker like A. *has* changed; his task is really lighter to him than it used to be, but he has lost the power necessary for its performance; just as the effective *weight* on a common lever may be reduced by lengthening the long arm; but if the *power* is also diminished the proportional gain will not be realized.

This being made clear, the question arises whether it was physical strength or mental energy that A. had lost? If it had been "physical strength"—using that term as synonymous with nerve-power—there should have been some evidences of physical disease to account for the weakness. A careful review of the symptoms noted will, however, show that not one of the number—in the absence of a strongly-marked indication —pointed to a physical cause. Even the want of force in the circulation, with deficient oxygenation of the blood, the dyspeptic symptoms, the slight local stagnations with corresponding sensations, and the atonic condition of the blood-vessels, betokened a vaso-motor depression which was more likely to be the result of want of tone than of actual weakness, and there was an entire absence

of any formulated disease in the organism. Knowing, therefore, the important part which mental energy—using that term to denote mind-force—plays in the maintenance of health, it was reasonable to conclude that it was this he lacked. The centres whereby *force* is supplied to the nervous system, and through it again to the organism as a whole, were failing to perform their functions, and there is no part of the psycho-physical being which may not suffer from such a cause.

It is useless to tell a man in this state to "rouse and exert" himself. He *cannot* shake off his malaise. He is as much ill as the patient who lies prostrate with fever and ague. The energy which would be required to supply the motor force of *self*-recovery is wanting. The disease consists in the drying up of the springs of vitality. Change may do good; it is probably the best remedy to use, but "change" is a generic term like "tonic," and we need to determine precisely what form of change each particular case requires before we can intelligently prescribe it. The obvious indication in the case of A. was to stimulate the centres which generate force, or from which, so to say, force springs—the centres of *vitality*. It is as impossible, in the present state of our knowledge, to ascertain the nature of these centres, as to discover where they are situated; but that it is not impossible to reach and influence them is proved by the circumstance that we do, now and then, accidentally hit on the sort of change a patient requires, and so use "change as a mental restorative."

Among the considerations which should guide the judgment in its selection of a form of change are, I believe, the following. Mere "change of air" is nothing to a man who is in physically good health. It will not produce any better or more lasting effect than the endeavour to recover his strength by administering nux vomica for the muscular system. "Change of scene" is not more likely

to benefit him. He is not sufficiently imaginative, and too old, to be stimulated by the mere *novelty* of his surroundings. As for awakening new interests in life by travel, he has not the mental energy requisite to get up the initial excitement. The question of treatment by change, therefore, narrows itself to the possibility of discovering some latent spark of energy, or an impressionable spot, in his dormant nerve-centres. Send such a man on a tour in which he has not, at the outset, any strong interest; trust to the contingency of an interest springing from the new scenes or the change itself, and you will generally fail; but find some potential susceptibility, deeply buried perhaps, within him to which you can apply a stimulus, and you will succeed; the latent energy will be stirred, the centres of vitality set once more in action, and motive-force capable of re-invigorating the system called into operation. Change which acts in this way is a safe mental restorative.

It is not invariably, or even generally, the experience that the right mode of eliciting mental energy from a patient in the condition I am describing proves agreeable to him. We know how in the long and deep depression that sometimes follows a great grief, when the mourner appears to be passing into a state of hopeless fatuity, and every endeavour to "rouse" the spirits by travel and gaiety—a vain and mischievous policy—has failed, some incident which stirs the old chord of sorrow through sympathy will revive the energy and restore the mind. That which proves useful in a grave case is necessary—though in a less pronounced form perhaps—in lighter cases. Practitioners make a great mistake when they treat the less fully-developed forms of mental disease as though they were essentially different in their nature from its advanced manifestations. The difference is one only of *degree*. The seemingly trivial hebetude of the man who has ceased to evolve the energy essential

to the maintenance of a healthy life because he has lost interest in his work, or become enervated by its monotony, is, I am convinced, a case for active mental treatment; and will require remedies as potent as, though perhaps in smaller doses than, those necessary to recover the mentally deranged from incipient dementia. In a case like that we are now studying it may well happen that the only way to revive the energy essential to life is to rekindle the spark of force buried in an old sorrow, and thus run the risk of renewing the pain it caused. When the question of change arises, it may be sometimes expedient to send a man back to the scene of a half-forgotten trouble or annoyance, or to subject him to a process of heart-stirring or pains-taking from which he will certainly recoil, and to which his medical adviser must shrink from submitting him.

We can all recall cases in which the very anxiety and worry we have striven to spare a patient have been ultimately forced upon him, and proved restorative, after our carefully-laid plans for smooth treatment have failed. Therefore I say do not reject any likely mode of stirring the energies of a person who may be sinking into a condition of mind-inertia, merely because it is likely to be distasteful. If it be possible to find a path to the hidden sources of energy, which does not lie through troubled water, that, of course, should be chosen—but the goal must be reached in *some* way. The energies must be aroused, though it be done awkwardly, and the nervous organization, though exquisitely sensitive, is happily by no means so delicate and fragile or liable to be thrown out of gear by rough treatment as many of us suppose.

It is too much the fashion of the day in mental medicine—and there are fashions in every department of the applied sciences—to allow cases to drift into dementia, for the great dread we have of appearing cruel in the

measures we adopt, or of doing a mischief by our interference. This fear is in part an affectation of "humanity," and in part of a piece with the reluctance so long exhibited by surgeons to perform operations of a critical character except in cases where life was already in jeopardy, thus shielding the risks of surgery under cover of the perils of disease. Listerism has dispelled the worst apprehensions of the surgeon, and opened the way for bolder and better surgery. It would be well if something analogous to the system of antiseptic precautions could be brought to the aid of practical psychology. The aim must be, at all costs, to reach the fount of vital force, and to do this "change" is most desirable; but it should be prescribed on precisely the same grounds as those upon which an insane person is removed to an asylum or placed among strangers and amid new surroundings. I mean the *therapeutic* considerations, with which alone the physician has any concern. Every form of "change" except the particular one indicated by the specific mental condition of the patient—looking to the history of the case, and the course of life antecedent to the illness or weakness, not less than to the existing state —must be held to be contraindicated, and likely to prove injurious.

What had happened in the case of A. was, doubtless, a gradual and unnoticed failure of the powers of mental life, with wasting—in a functional sense—of the centres of energy from disuse and the lack of proper stimulation: i. e. the stimulation of healthy and sufficient exercise, which is essential to the maintenance of the normal state and strength. He had lived on placidly, and worked automatically, although his career had appeared to himself, and others, perhaps, to be an intellectually active one. It is strange to note how small a share of the so-called "brain-work" of what seems to be an intellectual life is actually accomplished by the higher cerebral centres.

The Supreme Consciousness is ever striving to lighten its burden by delegating every duty which can be transferred to the department of the Subconsciousness. All *habitual* work is so delegated, and almost all routine duty. The Intellect—using that term loosely—teaches and trains the Automatic faculty, or Subconsciousness, to perform any act which has to be often repeated—whether it be the striking of a particular set of chords on the key-board of a piano, the eliciting of a special set of sounds by concerted movements of the two hands, as in playing a violin, or the performance of a series of associated mental and physical processes, as in reading aloud at sight, or in working out routine calculations with figures —and after the lesson is once taught, and a certain amount of dexterity is obtained by habit, the Consciousness not only does not, but cannot, take cognizance of the details of such work. This may be proved by any one who will try to think out at will the component parts of a series of combined movements by which he is in the habit of producing a particular result. For example, let the practised pianoforte player attempt to superintend the placing of his fingers on any set of keys and the method of striking them as he did when a learner, and he will break down. That is because the business of controlling the automatic or *habitual* part of the act of playing—i. e. fingering—has been delegated. The Supreme Consciousness has forgotten the lesson it once taught. This will show how what at the outset of any career may have been Intellectual work may have ceased to be so, and unless the Supreme Consciousness finds new business to exercise it, there may be loss of mental power for want of exercise, although the life seems to be one in which the higher cerebral faculties are still engaged.

A. would probably have persisted in his effortless course of existence, daily losing power, but without any perceptible change in his conduct, it may be taking wine freely

as a stimulant to the flagging energy, until a congestive pneumonia or acute attack of some disease caused the sapless and hollow life to collapse, had it not been for the domestic trouble which occasioned at first considerable mental excitement and then depression, a year and a half before the attack I have described. This trouble did not produce the condition into which he afterwards fell, but simply disclosed it. The momentum which was carrying the mental system on its monotonous course was interrupted by the shock, and the mind was left standing confessed as a ruin; but it was not the trouble that caused the ruin—that had been wrought previously by mental inaction.

At this conjuncture in the history of the case "change" seemed likely to do good, but it was evident that it must be a change that would stimulate to exercise and repair. Rest would have completed the disaster by allowing the unstirred embers of a smouldering life to die out. There was not sufficient energy to make a new start possible; and the only practicable treatment was to call upon the old centres of energy, those which gave out the force that enabled this man to do good work years before. It was impossible to set these long disused centres in action by mere sympathy. Appeal to a person in this plight to revive his love of the pursuits that interested him years ago, and it will be impossible for him to respond; but place him in circumstances which, so to say, *compel* a revival of the old associations and call up the forgotten impressions of a vigorous period of life, and the former energy will, in a measure at least, reappear. Recommend "change" vaguely or generally in a case of this class, and, if carried into effect, so as to give the mind what is called "relief," the prescription can scarcely fail to do harm. Place the patient amid a new scene of activity, charged with a duty which shall call his dormant energies into action; set him to start a new establish-

ment on the same pattern as his own, or to search out the causes of failure in some enterprise like that in which he has been successful, and you will probably cure him; because the "change" you exhibit as a remedy for his morbid state is not simply a change of place, of air, of scene, or of the surroundings, but a change in the inner workings of his mind, which lifts him out of a morbid groove, not on to a new line calling for new motives and fresh energy, but back on to the old lines of his life, where the associations and impressions of an active stage of his experience will be reawakened, and the energies of a period when the pulse of life was vigorous once more stirred. If no such opportunity offers, then send him fearlessly to the scene of some sorrow or difficulty that may lie buried in his memory, but to which still living, and possibly vital, though slumbering, energies cling.

It is one of the unrecognized advantages of our mental constitution that every trial in life calls into existence new energies, which when it is past still adhere to it. We know how when any circumstance recalls the recollection of a wrong done to us, or a mistake or wrong we have ourselves committed, the feelings and impulses the event originally stirred are revived, how we again burn with the sense of injury, or sink with shame. When the physician has to deal with a dormant and dying mental organism, he should not hesitate to stir the recollection of evil for the sake of its associated good, i. e. the energy that lies entangled with its memories, and which may act as a stimulus to the now lethargic mind. Of course such a plan of treatment needs to be devised and carried out with judgment, but what *active* measure for the relief of suffering, or the cure of disease, does not call for skill and caution? The surgeon requires to be familiar with the anatomy of the region he invades with his scalpel. It is one of the marvels of medicine that the physician expects to be able to minister to a mind

diseased without obtaining a corresponding acquaintance with its constitution and subtle processes.

The case I have cited may be taken as the type of a very large and daily-increasing class of instances in which the *state* the physician is called upon to treat is discovered, instead of being produced, by the event or condition assigned—by the friends and possibly by the patient himself—as its cause. The mental state may not appear to be a very serious one, but it is, and measures at once prompt and vigorous are required for its relief. A. was recovered from his depression—after a long period of "rest" and *supervision* which not only did him no good, but great harm—by the mental stimulus of a fortunate concurrence of circumstances that compelled him to action. Previous to this call upon his energies, he had fallen into a condition which threatened the most serious results, and the more he rested, and relief was sought in "change," the worse he became. There can be no question that what saved him was *work* with an earnest purpose, and a precise aim.

Case 2.

B. was about five-and-thirty years of age, but prematurely old. He had ample means for his personal requirements as a bachelor, and good expectations, but no settled or earnest purpose in life. He was educated without any view to personal activity, and, though a man of excellent parts, had never achieved permanent success in any enterprise, because, on his own confession, he lacked the motive to prosecute any undertaking beyond the point at which it chanced to become irksome or ceased to inspire interest. He was a lounger in life, less from idleness than from what he and his friends believed to be a "constitutional" inability to engage in any serious occupation, unless impelled by impulse, or excited by some strong liking for the special enterprise. He

was emotional and enthusiastic, but of late had lost all zest for existence, and after a career of somewhat refined dissipation, he had become moody, and fears were entertained for his sanity, so jaded was he mentally and physically, and so completely had he ceased to feel, or show himself, capable of the ordinary exertion which even a life of pleasure in society demands. B. had been recommended "change," and had spent two years in dragging a weary round of the too familiar centres of fashionable and social activity, without benefit. Indeed, he reported himself rather the worse than the better for being incessantly on the move. It seemed to have added restlessness to his previous *ennui*, and unless something could be done for his amendment his friends feared, and he himself at times appeared to apprehend, a disastrous ending. There was no indication of physical disease, and no complaining except of insufferable mind-weariness and an oppressive powerlessness to find relief or satisfaction in anything. A fastidious appetite would seem to have been the last source of daily excitement, but even that was beginning to lose its influence as a mental stimulant. He had not even the energy to be an epicure.

The folly of prescribing "change" vaguely, or merely as *change*, in a case of this class must be evident. Nothing can be more unreasonable than to recommend a man who is perpetually on the move to seek change, unless indeed his migrations have become too automatic and his life too rhythmical. Some experiences which seem to be full of change are, in truth, as monotonous as the music of a barrel-organ, and a traveller always on the road may be the subject of mental depression from want of excitement. What would be excitement to others is dull routine to him. The case before us was not one of this sort, but it would have been manifestly absurd to recommend change for a man of pleasure who was ever on the wing, flitting here

and there in search of some new mental stimulant. Such a man lives on mental stimulants, and although there might be danger of collapse, should he be compelled to remain in one place during a lengthened period, there could be no prospect of serving him by sending him again on his travels.

The *rôle* of change as a mental restorative has been played out so far as the cure of such a sufferer is concerned. The physician must find a new way of stimulating his vital energies, and with a view to achieving this difficult feat it will always be necessary to study the mental experience of each individual case of the class very closely before determining on a plan of treatment. For example, it is useless to send a man mountaineering if he has no enterprise; it is idle to drag him round the picture galleries of Europe if he lacks or has lost interest in art; to make him gaze on beautiful or grand scenery if he has no imagination; and it is cruel—I can use no other term—to expect him to loiter at places of fashionable resort when he dislikes society; or to wander through Switzerland when he inclines to feed his melancholy in solitude. Nevertheless, these are the stock varieties of "change," and familiar forms of prescription, used, for the most part capriciously, because some virtue is supposed to lie in the bare fact of change. It is to ask reconsideration of this mode of prescription I am writing. I do not deny that there are cases in which rapid movement from place to place may prove stimulating to the centres of vitality; and sometimes a "fixed idea," or what threatens to become one, may be, so to say, shaken out of the mind by a process of mental jolting, but such cases are few, and for one patient benefited by this treatment many are injured.

The loungers in society are not as a rule amenable to the influence of mere change. They have exhausted the remedy before they seek advice; but if anything can

make travel useful to a patient of this order, it will be a sufficiently long tour in a district where the daily experience includes a series of petty annoyances, great enough to rouse the dormant energies, but not so serious as to stir the mind to unhealthy anger, or induce a man of means and leisure to abandon the enterprise in disgust. Instances are not wanting of men and women who have been saved from drifting into hypochondriac stupidity by the minor inconveniences of hotel life and locomotion — common thirty years ago all over the Continent. The "change" which consists exclusively in an alteration of the surroundings will not, however, prove restorative in a large proportion of cases, inasmuch as the evil it is designed to cure does not lie in the life of relation, but much deeper. No mere change in the apparatus or the arrangements of the outer life and surroundings *can* suffice, because the malady does not consist in any derangement of ideas or misdirection of energy, but, as in the case of A.—though from a different cause—it lies in the fact that the centres of mental, and therefore of vital, energy are dormant, and the remedy must be one that, so to say, reaches through the environment and acts directly on the springs of life.

The feeling of mind-weariness of which a patient of this class complains, and which makes him long for "rest," is either the fatigue due to nerve-weakness and the debility of inertia, or it is the exhaustion produced by straining and effort to do work which ought to be natural and effortless. It is one of the disadvantages of an enthusiastic temperament that it works by impulse. Great spirit is thrown into a congenial occupation, so long as it continues to please, but anything which does not inspire interest is either avoided or quickly abandoned. Bad training, which teaches boys to do what "they like," and leave what they "have no taste for," instead of making the business of life a duty, and the

discharge of duty—work for its own sake—a primary object, intensifies this evil where it exists, and creates it in temperaments which are naturally free from it but readily fall into any trouble-saving way of working from motives of selfishness. Thus it comes to pass that the interest a man feels in an occupation is the measure, and the only sufficient stimulus, of his energy. When, from any cause, interest flags or the attention is diverted by circumstances, the ordinary business of life becomes irksome, and there arises a need for effort to compel exertion. Nothing wears, irritates, and exhausts the mind like this. It is not the work on an uncongenial task that does mischief, but the consumption of energy in self-persuasion which ought to be devoted to the work itself. The amount of moral coercion which needs to be applied to the refractory consciousness by the supreme will, or conscience—and is applied even by the seemingly purposeless—is astonishing; and all because the individual has habituated himself to work by impulse and only when he feels an interest and has an object that inspires! This is the real cause of many a breakdown.

The change a man like B. requires is one which will stir a deeper spring of energy than has yet supplied him with motive-force, by compelling his recognition of the *responsibilities* of life. It is idle to hope he can be roused to action by the discovery of a new pleasure. Better face the fact that this stimulus to exertion has lost its efficacy. The latent energies of such a character are more likely to be called out by pain and necessity than by pleasure and satisfaction. In the case of A., the true centres of energy had passed into a state of drowsiness from the subsidence of a legitimate interest in work and duty; in that of B. these centres can scarcely be said to have ever been aroused. Impulse rather than deep feeling had been the source of his motive-power. It was impossible, therefore, to profit by the revival of old

associations; there were none to which dormant energies could cling.

The emotional part of man's nature lies, if I may say so, more on the surface than that with which the judgment and conscience are concerned; and it is more dependent than they are on the surroundings. If these are of a sort to stir the sympathies or excite the passions, the nature is readily moved—all the more readily because it is only the surface of the pool which is being troubled—and the agitation whence the motive-force of this movement springs will subside as soon as the external stimulus is withdrawn, the first effect of novelty has been exhausted, or another excitant has commenced to act. This is why emotional and impulsive persons are, as a rule, what is called fickle in their likes and dislikes. Their joys and griefs, their loves and hates, their purposes and ambitions are short-lived, and as these are almost their only sources of energy, the motive-force of enterprise or action, though strong within them while it lasts, is quickly spent. They are, in a very practical sense, "the creatures of circumstance," for the environment is the positive, and their superficial characters form the negative, part of the circuit through which the energy courses. Up to a certain point in the history of a case like that of B. it is possible to rouse and control the mental system through the surroundings, and change is therefore of temporary value; but a point is sooner or later reached at which all practicable sources of external motive are exhausted, and then *ennui* supervenes. There is, however, always the hope in a case of this class that, by some expedient, the underlying centres may be reached, and that, if this can be accomplished, a new energy—the true energy of life and character—will be elicited.

When we are asked, or it occurs to us, to prescribe "change" for a case like this of B., it is necessary to cast

about for the means of carrying out two obvious indications—first, to provide a new set of surroundings; second, to stir, or seek to stir, a deeper motive for action. Many a man of pleasure who has reached this dead-point in his life has been saved by the loss of a fortune and the creation of a pressing need for personal exertion. This remedy is, of course, beyond the reach of the physician, but in so far as it may be possible for him to supply an urgent incentive to exertion, it is his duty to do so. It is generally too late to *win* the sufferer to an active career in life; and it is difficult to find employment which will call out the energy of a man who can at any moment retire before a difficulty without humiliation or distress. The poor and friendless *must* persevere or they will suffer loss and disgrace; the rich incur no penalty by desertion, and *they* are never friendless.

There is still a resource in the difficulty. It is practically impossible to grapple with the individual temperament; the aim must therefore be to search for some inherited seed of ambition or enterprise which has never yet germinated. In this difficulty a study of the ancestral history stands the physician in good stead and may suggest a curative remedy. This is a point of interest to which I am particularly desirous of drawing attention. Instead of simply recommending "change" for change's sake, it is the duty of the physician to grope through the top-lumber of a character such as that we are studying, and feel for some impressionable spot in the underlying nature. The story of a father's or grandfather's life will often furnish a clue to the discovery of a latent source of energy and suggest the means of arousing it. If this search is wisely prosecuted, the change prescribed may be so formulated as to stir the energies of the *inner-life* when the patient least expects such a result. He may be sent, without assigning a motive, or even taking the friends into one's confidence—always a perilous proceeding—to some

scene, or on an expedition, which shall bring him suddenly into close relations with the same class of stimuli that once incited the nature he has inherited to vigorous action. Such a plan of treatment involves trouble, great painstaking, and judgment, but all these will be well requited if the patient is rescued from a fate that overtakes too many cases which are not thus closely studied.

B. was cured—I use the phrase advisedly—by the awakening of a strong passion for the breeding of stock which he had inherited from his grandfather, but which had not been aroused in his nature, and probably would never have been if he had not been thrown into circumstances which excited, almost provoked him to emulate the success of a neighbour. His father had no such interest in the subject, and was surprised when a son of whom he had seen little and from whom he expected less—though his heir—returned from a short excursion seriously and earnestly bent on trying a great experiment. In a very similar case, in which no such awakening of energy occurred, and where the *ennui* was untreated, being regarded as beyond relief, the sufferer put an end to his existence, almost philosophically, and with the feeling that life was played out; a form of "temporary insanity" which humanity may deem it expedient to recognize, but science must repudiate, or—more charitably—ignore.

Case 3.

C. was a little over fifty years of age. He had been for many years actively engaged in work which required intellectual energy of a very high order. He had to read papers, listen to speeches, think, and arrange arguments daily. His labours extended far into the night and involved considerable bodily as well as mental exertion; besides which he was an active man, fond of exercise, and never seemed consciously weary. He fed largely, drank freely, though never to "excess" in the conven-

tional sense of the term, and altogether well lived up to the limits of a politico-social life. Everything went well and his health caused no anxiety until an occurrence from which, to use a popular expression, he received a slight physical, and slighter mental, "shock." For some days after this incident C. scarcely thought of the matter. He engaged in his accustomed avocations, and, except that he was less rapid and forcible than usual in his manner of working—hesitating a little as though his mind were pre-occupied, or he were instantly expecting some interruption—there was no marked change in his condition. In the course of a fortnight, however, a sense of effort oppressed him, his appetite began to fail, his sleep was disturbed, his skin was bedewed with perspiration on the slightest exertion, he felt weary and longed for rest.

Under advice, he left town for a few weeks of relaxation and "rest," and returned apparently better in his general health, but with the same feeling of mind-weariness and incapacity for work. From being the most energetic of intellectual workers he became, in less than two months from the date of the breakdown, apathetic, and disposed to shrink from even moderate brain-action; although not in the least degree averse from pleasant company, or any ordinary physical occupation requiring strength and even energy. His bodily condition seemed to be restored, but his mind was still, and increasingly, incapacitated. Prolonged repose was then prescribed, but matters grew worse rather than better. The mental disability became so great that the sight of a book, or the introduction of a topic requiring thought into conversation, became intolerable. Change was tried in respect to place, climate, scenery, the surroundings, and the manner of life, without avail, and matters began to look serious, when a sudden call was made on his mental energies by a controversy which at once provoked and excited him—for the

moment, as it appeared, injuriously. He returned to work with all his old power and earnestness, and soon surpassed anything he had done before for clearness, extent, and even brilliancy.

The history of this case is representative. It shows at once the value and the danger of *rest.* As I read the symptoms, C. had been working at pressure and by the force of interest in his occupation, until he had unconsciously consumed that reserve of energy upon which the buoyancy and vigour of his life depended. If we may use scientific terms metaphorically, I should like to say that the mental part of the organism in the case of this man was in the condition of a lung with no large residuum of contained air. The intimate structure of the mind was, so to speak, not extended. It answered the purposes of daily duty; just as the aerial surface of a partially disabled lung may suffice for the oxygenation of the blood passing through it, so long as the circulation is normal and the atmosphere pure, but if the conditions should cause any sudden demand on its capacity it will be found wanting. The vitality of our being as a whole is principally sustained by the energy of the particular part of the organism which is most actively exercised in our daily life. The intellectual worker is chiefly energized by mental power. Imagination, hope, fear, and the manifestations of "mind" generally, occupy the foremost place, and play the leading parts in his life and character. Cut him off from the sources of intellectual—as distinguished from physical—strength, and he will languish. His books, his prospects, his means of mental exercise, are the stimuli of his vital energy, and deprived of these he would fall into a state of inertia and ultimately collapse. It is as important to the health of the man of intellect that he should have a reserve stock of *mental* energy as it is to the rustic to be "strong of limb," or the climber of mountains to be "full-chested." In each case the power of endurance under any exceptional

strain will depend on the store of strength—of the class chiefly necessary to the individual—which happens to be held in reserve. If a man unnecessarily exhausts this reserve, he is living from hand to mouth, so far as his supplies are concerned, and whenever a special call is made upon him, having no reserve of force to meet the exceptional demand, he may, we might almost say must, break down.

C. broke down when he received a mental shock—too slight to affect other men seriously—because he was living on *mental* power, and working up to the limit of his strength without maintaining a reserve of mental force. All the energy of which he was capable—i. e. the total force evolved by his higher cerebral centres—was expended in the daily life, so intensely did he live, by the energy of intellect. A physical injury would not have thus lowered his vitality. This is evident from the fact that his general health improved under the stimulus of the first change; the physical strength with its faculty of recuperation could not have been exhausted.

It is curious to note how the exhaustion of reserves occurs. At first sight it might seem impossible that any part of the system could be reduced to this extremity. The law that makes every part of the organism grow by use would seem to provide against such a catastrophe. We might infer that the man who worked his brain vigorously must be developing the faculty of cerebral recuperation side by side with the exercise of cerebral functions. When we come to look more closely into the matter it will be found that unless the work done is perfectly rhythmical, and provides—which is something more than allows—due periods of rest under conditions that admit of repose, the repair of tissue will not go on as rapidly as its consumption. I do not assert that the repair of our organs occurs during intervals of exercise, I believe that is a misconception, but unless periods of rest are observed the strain is not taken off the

energies, and the bearings of the machinery of life become overheated. Over-work, as I understand it, is not too much work, but work under wrong physiological conditions. A man may always do as much as he *can* do, but if he is to preserve his health he must so methodize his time and manner of exertion as to secure distinct and sharply-marked intervals during which each part of the organism may rest.

The several parts of the compound being and organism of man cannot always be rested simultaneously, but they must all be thrown into a state of repose at suitable periods; and the sum total of the rest enjoyed must bear a physiological relation to the sum of work, of heat, of energy evolved. Even the heart rests a distinct period in the cycle of its rhythmical movements, and no part of the system can bear a *continuous* strain; nor is it the fact, as some persons seem to believe, that exertion may be safely prolonged if only the rest that follows be extended likewise. Every part of the organism has its individual character and departmental method of working. These ways of life are formulated in the process of development,* and when a man is old he can seldom depart from them with impunity.

In the case of C. doubtless recuperation of the mental organism actually commenced with the first "change," but it proceeded so slowly that it is scarcely likely to have re-established the reserves in time to save the brain from drifting into dementia by disuse, if the propitious incident, which roused the dormant energies to action, had not opportunely occurred. The rest was not *restorative*, because it did not bring the mind back to work; the new excitant performed that service, and rescued the victim of a temporary breakdown from the degeneration, from want of exercise, with which his brain was threatened. It is not only unnecessary, but perilous, to leave

* 'Youth: its care and culture' (David Bogue, 1880).

a broken bone too long in splints. Repair may proceed up to a certain point advantageously while the limb rests, but there will be danger of a stiff joint if exercise is too long delayed. The curative treatment of a crippled mind requires as careful management as the recovery of a disabled limb.

It is not so much "rest" that the majority of weary and seemingly exhausted persons require, as a new excitement. Their habitual life has become too exclusively automatic, as all eventless and routine existences, however earnest and active, have a tendency to become. The supreme centres of consciousness, which in the civilized and educated races must play a prominent, if not the chief, part in life, readily cease to work, and by working make force, when the demand on their activity is daily diminishing, as in the case of A.; or suddenly suspended by rest, employed as a remedy for some temporary evil, as in the case of C. After they have dozed or lain idle for some time these cerebral centres lose tone, and become irritable when specially aroused.

Many a man who did good work cheerfully and was mentally healthy so long as he was struggling to the top of a hill and fighting difficulties at every upward step, is morbidly inert, and in danger of intellectual and nervous dissolution, now that he has reached the summit and sees little more to strive for, and nothing to win. Rest has already done him a mischief, and *complete* rest as a remedy will be still more mischievous, although somewhat less so than excessive or laborious effort would be. Complete rest is not compatible with life. Short periods of repose alternate with exercise, but they do not normally reach the depth of degradation implied by even comparative quiescence. They are rather like the "banking up" and "damping down" of a furnace than the extinguishing of a fire. The machinery of life may be eased, but the energy must not be depressed

below a certain point, or there will be danger of mental death. It is this *energy* with which we are now concerned. It springs from the vital centres, and these cannot be allowed to sleep if the life of mind- and nerve-force is to be maintained. When, therefore, we speak of giving a patient rest by change, it should be understood that we mean to give him other surroundings which shall stimulate his energies in a new way, and from a fresh point of vantage. Work is not only the penalty but the means of existence, and energy is best "conserved" when the centres by which it is generated are healthily exercised.

A. failed because his higher centres of mental energy had become powerless, if not also disorganized, by disuse, in the course of a placid automatic life; and when a strain fell on the mind it could not bear the pressure, and gave way. B. broke down because his higher centres of mental energy had never been properly developed by the educational effect of vigorous exercise and healthy mind-training, and they would only respond to the special stimulation of likes and dislikes. When the sources of pleasure were exhausted in the case of this man, who was personally and socially above the level of those annoyances which healthily stimulate the bread-winner and responsible citizen, his mental energies failed naturally — that is, in natural relation to the imperfect evolutionary state of his centres of energy. C. collapsed in consequence of exhaustion by "over-work," in an approximately reasonable construction of that strange term. The real fault was work under wrong conditions — that is to say, conditions physiologically discordant. The energy of life was too exclusively intellectual in its character and sources. The business of existence was transacted almost exclusively by the supreme consciousness; every effort being voluntary, and nearly all exer-

tion a product of the Will; little being automatic or relegated to the subconsciousness in the domain of Habit. This is a most costly system of vital economy, and one which must sooner or later exhaust the largest resources and the highest powers, unless more than common care is taken to secure a perfectly rhythmical method of work, with distinctly recurring and sufficiently long periods of rest. The safe and healthy intellectual life is that in which the functions of the supreme cerebral centres and the lower centres which conduct the actions grouped under the term "habit," are discharged naturally harmoniously, and in due relative proportion, each taking its share of the burden and heat of the day's work.

I believe a fallacy underlies the notion of working the muscular system as a diversion to the mind, when intellectual "weariness" springs from deficiency of energy rather than exhaustion of strength, as in the cases we have been discussing. If an energetic mind becomes worried with its work because the occupation is in itself vexatious and worrying to the consciousness, relief may, indeed, be found in directing the energies into a new channel, as when a vigorous scholar or statesman obtains recreation—in the true sense of the term—in felling trees. A man of energy climbs mountains, or hunts, or shoots with advantage; an irritated, though constitutionally well-balanced, temperament may find comfort in fishing; but these are cases in which the source of danger to the mind has lain in the work done, not in failure of the force by which it has been accomplished.

If the distinction I have tried to draw, between exhaustion of strength by work and defect of energy, is recognized, it will be seen that "change" can only prove mentally restorative when it acts as a new and appropriate stimulus to the centres whence energy springs; and that

the scientific aim of the practitioner should be to select a form of "change" which shall surround the patient with circumstances potent to incite the dormant or failing centres of energy to improved modes of action. The skilful adaptation of the mental remedy to the mental state and temperament will often prove troublesome, but success when it rewards the effort will be a triumph, and disappointment when it occurs can scarcely fail to instruct. Whereas if we prescribe "change" at random, as one may draw a bow at a venture, hoping to "do good," though unable to determine how, we must not be surprised if our practice is deemed empirical.

Every "change" has three component parts, or may be viewed under three aspects:—1. The state, place, or surroundings from which the subject of change is removed; 2. The state, place, or surroundings to which he is transferred; 3. The *change* itself. And this last-mentioned part or aspect, namely, the change itself, has three elements or phases—1. The liberation; 2. The new condition; 3. The movement or alteration. That the therapeutic value of "alteration" should not be overlooked may be inferred from the circumstance that the ancients, who were keen observers, designated a special group of remedies as *alteratives!* No exhibition of "change" as a remedy for disease or a restorative can be scientifically complete which does not take cognizance of this sixfold property of the treatment prescribed. It is in truth a serious business to recommend "change." Carefully adapted to the special needs of each individual case, it is one of the most potent of influences which the physician can bring to bear in the treatment of many mental, and not a few physical, states. When not thus precisely employed, it is not merely a waste of power and opportunity, but an agent of mischief, often the very mischief from which it is desirable to protect the patient with a view to a successful and speedy cure. "Change,"

probably, never fails to produce *some* effect on the case under treatment, and more commonly than not it does harm, if it be only by blunting the sensitive faculties to the impressions of an agent which, if rightly applied, would do good.

It is impossible to draw a sharp line between "change" which chiefly affects the body and which is intended to influence the mind. The mental and physical elements of man's nature are so interwoven that we cannot distinguish between them, or deal with either singly; but the unreasonable and, as I believe, unscientific separation of mind symptoms and diseases from the symptoms and diseases of the body, to form a *specialty* called "mental medicine," has, among other evil consequences, led to the neglect—we might almost say practical failure—to recognize the æsthetic aspects of "change." Physicians have reformed the practice of prescribing change vaguely for the body indifferently well. They no longer say to a patient, "You want change," or to the friends of a sick person, "Give him the benefit of a change." Even such phrases as "change of air" and "a thorough change" are being superseded by more precise forms of expression. The individual case is studied, and the patient is told when to go, where to sojourn, how to secure for his bodily health or the relief of his malady the special temperature, atmosphere, food and drink, most likely to produce the effect desired. Meanwhile, so little is the mental aspect of "change" regarded, that even those influences which cannot fail to be exerted on the mind and temper of a patient by the carrying out of the plan of treatment recommended for his physical advantage are ignored. For example, the mental irritation which will be produced, the *ennui* endured, the sense of confinement below and of sudden exposure on deck, the regret at leaving home, the impatience certain to be engendered by the voyage with its alternating hopes and

fears, the excitement incidental to the change, and last, though by no means least in importance, the perpetual sense of being subjected to an extreme measure of treatment—all count for nothing when a patient is sent on a trip to the Cape and back for his lungs, although the mental influences exerted *must* play an important part in the result obtained. Hereafter it may be discovered that the æsthetic element or phase of the treatment by "change" is considerable in the therapy of bodily disease. At a still more advanced stage of the inquiry it will, I am persuaded, be found to be among the most powerful agents we possess for the treatment of disease, derangements, and disturbances of the mental temperament and the mind, but one which to be harmless and useful needs to be specifically applied.

Before leaving this subject of change as a mental restorative, let me embrace the opportunity to say a word by way of caution in regard to the mistaken measures too often taken for the *relief* of what is supposed to be "over-work." In nearly all the cases of this class which fall under the notice of the alienist, there has been a more or less prolonged use of "stimulants" to mitigate the sense and suffering of mental fatigue. It is no uncommon occurrence to find that the patient has been taking alcohol habitually, though in small doses, as a restorative; and "sleeping draughts"—composed of opium in some form, chloral hydrate, or bromide of potassium—night after night for weeks, or even months. Patients of all ages, constitutions, and temperaments, troubled with sleeplessness of all forms and degrees, arising from the most diverse and contradictory causes, are dosed with these deleterious drams and drugs. This is a serious business. Alcohol cannot possibly be harmless in cases of the class we have been considering. Over-stimulation of the lower centres is the very evil we have to dread and must sedulously strive to avoid; and

alcohol never increases the power of the higher centres; it can only for the moment irritate them, and in the long run lower their nutrition. They are not simply sluggish, but devitalized—if I may use the expression—and alcohol has the effect of diminishing the nutritive value of the blood. They have no reserve of energy to give out, and it is worse than useless urging them. Nor is it permissible to procure sleep by drugs when the sleeplessness has no specific cause; because the faculty of taking natural rest is one of the functions of rhythmical life, and the life is not merely unrhythmical, in these cases, but at a very low ebb. I do not question that there are cases in which sleeplessness is due to an interruption of the ordinary succession of the waking and sleeping states,* and the timely and limited use of a "soporific" may re-establish the rhythm and cure the evil; but the cases of which I am now treating are not of this nature, and nothing can be more unfortunate than the even moderate use of stimulants and sedatives as *palliatives*. The aim must be to promote nutrition, and the only way to do this is to exercise the part to be nourished, naturally—that is, by inciting it to action with a natural stimulant, one which operates functionally, creating a mental purpose and stirring the energy through the Will. The difference between this method and that which consists in stimulation by alcohol or drugs, is the difference between winding a watch and setting its wheels in motion through the central force of the mainspring, and compelling the mechanism to move by twisting certain of its wheels on their pivots. For general health purposes drugs may be necessary, but for the remedy of the mental disturbance, only mental treatment will prove effectual.

* I have discussed the question of occasional sleeplessness from this cause in a little work on 'Sleep and Sleeplessness' (London: David Bogue, 1879).

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